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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Conventional disarmament on a regional scale

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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COLOMBIA

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[30 September 1992]

1. Reducing the military capacity of States through disarmament, arms control and the reduction of military expenditure is recognized today as a powerful and vital factor in any multidimensional concept of security, at a time when social insecurity, the product of among other things poverty, unemployment and environmental degradation, confronts the developing regions especially with a form of insecurity that cannot be fought with weapons but only by political and social instruments, including various forms of international cooperation.

2. The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, whether through arms production or transfer, the escalation of the arms race in some regions, driven by increased military spending by major arms purchasers and by the avarice of exporters, and the continuing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constitute a major source of threats to regional peace and stability and thus to international security as a whole.

3. The security of the developing regions is doubly affected by the excessive accumulation of weapons and the conventional arms race: their social and economic growth is affected by the diversion of their scanty resources to the purchase of weapons, and their military security is affected through the role played by conventional weapons and their transfer in the outbreak and escalation of local and regional conflicts.

4. In some countries, conflicts are breaking out, born of ethnic or religious rivalries and the awakening of nationalism, that seriously endanger their territorial integrity and the peace and stability of the region to which they belong. The security of other countries is threatened by problems of international dimension such as drug trafficking, terrorism and the illicit arms trade. The gap and the disparities between the developed North and the poverty stricken South are steadily increasing and growing dangerously worse. Nor does the present trend, whereby a handful of countries can set themselves up as the guardians of an international security which they defined in accordance with their own interests, facilitate the solution of regional security problems. Thus, regional institutions will place new responsibilities on the States of their particular region, which often share the same problems, for safeguarding their own peace and stability within the framework of these conditions.

5. The process of conventional disarmament on a regional scale will have to take into account the characteristics of each region, and will have to be consistent and non-discriminatory, covering all types of weapons and involving all States, particularly the greater military Powers. To that end, each nation will have to assume its share of responsibility for regional

disarmament, in accordance with the principles of the Charter and respect for international law, while the regional organizations and the United Nations must play a central role in monitoring the fulfilment of these responsibilities.

6. We believe that regional disarmament measures cannot be selective or harmful to the security of any State, in particular that of the smaller States. Every Government has a responsibility to defend its territory from both external and internal threats and to decide the amount of resources to be allocated to national defence as compared with the expenditure required for the social and economic development of its people. Nevertheless, we believe that a better understanding exists in the developing regions of the negative consequences of excessive arms build-up, and of the paradoxical situation created by a trade in which the poor countries strip themselves of their scanty resources to enrich the wealthy, often without achieving greater stability or security in exchange.

7. The transition from a militarily bipolar world, and thus from confrontation, to a world which will, we hope, be one of greater understanding, imposes an obligation on the various regions to seek their own cooperative solutions to the world-wide challenges in the social, economic, environmental and human spheres. Thus, the traditional concepts of military threat, national security and defence expenditure are undergoing fundamental changes which should give new impetus to the disarmament process.

8. Regional disarmament measures cannot be considered in isolation. The States of a region must endeavour to reduce the risks of conflict, solve their disputes by peaceful means and adopt confidence-building measures which can at the same time contribute to the adoption of disarmament measures.

9. Colombia attaches priority to the elimination of the illicit arms trade. Thus, the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991, proposed by Colombia and adopted by consensus, urges, invites and calls upon States to take various measures, and to cooperate at the international, regional and subregional levels, to that end. It is to be hoped that, in accordance with the unanimous support obtained by the resolution, immediate action will be taken to eradicate the illicit arms trade.